

keep accounts straight, and have all properly reported.

The money thus far received for all causes from different sources has nearly all come from sisters or preachers, not from business men or farmers, and scarcely any from Pennsylvania. It indeed looks as if the old Keystone State was dead to all entreaties for the cause of missions. It is often remarked that "competition is the life of trade." If that saying is true the State and National secretaries will have to enter into a friendly contest for their respective treasuries. What say you, Brother Replogle?

Funds are coming in slowly and tardy, and yet I feel to thank God for what does come. The work has begun and it will grow.

JACOB C. CASSEL,
Sec. M. B. of the B. C.

Our Bible School

PRAYER MEETING TOPICS

CHARACTER STUDIES.—"ISAAC"

J. L. GILLIN

I. Biography

- a. "Isaac" laughter. Why? Gen. 21: 6.
- b. A child of promise and prayer. Gen. 17: 16-21. (1) Ishmael was not accepted because he was a child of unbelief. Gen. 16: 2.
- c. His selection of a wife. (1) Assisted by Abraham. Gen. 24: 2-4. Why was Abraham unwilling to have his son marry a Canaanite? (2.) Her name? Gen. 24: 67. (3.) How were they related.
- d. Lies about his wife to save his own life. Gen. 26: 6-11. (1.) Had any of his ancestors done likewise? (2.) Is moral weakness inherited by children from parents as well as physical weakness? Ex. 20: 5.
- e. Deceived by Rebekah and Jacob. Gen. 27: 1-29.
- f. Is partial to Esau. Gen. 25: 28. (1) Did any trouble come from it? (2.) Death. Gen. 35: 27-29.

II. Life Lessons.

- a. Was true to his sense of right.
- b. His failures were sinful but were committed in an immoral age.
- c. Heeded God's call always.
- d. Had faith in God's promise to Abraham and himself.

THE PRAYER MEETING

J. L. GILLIN

"There is nothing new under the sun," said Solomon. Some years ago some wide-awake pastor organized what he called a prayer meeting, and most people imagined he had created something new. But he had not.

He had merely rediscovered the most primitive form of meeting known to the Christian church. It yet abides in the memory of many of you, that our ecclesiastical ancestors according to the flesh, the Dunkards, looked with distrust upon the prayer meeting as an innovation by worldly church-

es to be tolerated by them not for a moment. And even now only in their most progressive churches and only at a very late date are they allowed. But strangest fact of all is that even in the Brethren church men are found who long for "the good old times" and think the prayer meeting the result of a too worldly tendency.

The simple fact, as attested by the plainest evidences of early church history, and even the records of the Acts of the Apostles, is that the prayer meeting was the earliest and, for some time the only form of church service. The meeting that preceded the pentecostal revival was a prayer meeting held in some "upper room" in Jerusalem. (Acts 1: 13, 14.) When Peter was in prison for the testimony of Jesus, it was to a prayer meeting he went, when in answer to the prayers of those there assembled he was released by the angel of God. Acts 12: 17.

It was at a prayer meeting that Paul spoke the message of salvation which made the first convent in Europe. Acts 16: 11-15.

These few instances show how important a place the prayer meeting occupied in the Apostolic church. It may never have been in your thought that these were prayer meetings, but such was the case according to Scripture.

No such thing as our modern preaching service existed in the primitive church. That was a later development first seen in the days of the supremacy of the Greek church. It is true that evangelistic services were held in those early days, but these were not held in any regular consecutive series, as ours are, but more as the street preachers of the Salvation Army conduct such services.

These facts are no argument, however, against either a preaching service, or consecutive evangelistic services. But the testimony of both scripture and church history is that the prayer meeting was the chief meeting of the disciples for fellowship and the exercise of those gifts of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, those early prayer meetings had almost the identical features of our own. From it was developed most of the other and later forms of service.

It was the centre whence flowed those mighty streams of influence which swept over Asia and Europe with such transforming power. It was the meeting whither the disciples turned, amidst the storms of persecution, to find solace, fellowship, sympathy and strength.

As in early churches, so even today the prayer meeting is the spiritual magazine of the church.

If that be so, how little spiritual power some churches have? One of the sad facts of present day "churchianity" is the insignificance of the prayer meeting. I recognize, however, that its significance spiritually remains practically what it has always been. Its insignificance is only in the eyes of the unspiritual members who do not attend, or of unspiritual pastors who do not want it.

And one of the saddest commentaries on the spiritual state of both people and preacher is that they do not recognize its importance. In the church of the Apostles every disciple was very sorry if he could not be present at the prayer meeting. In the church of the nineteenth century most of the "disciples" are sorry if they cannot find some excuse for absence. Not that we have less intelligence than they; only less spirituality. Not that we are less zealous for our church; only less zealous for Christ.

Is it any wonder that some church members can truthfully say that spiritual work like the prayer meeting demands "is not in their line," when there is no family worship, none or very little of private devotions, and no prayer meetings? How can such Christians ever enjoy heaven, that place where all our occupation is praise and spiritual worship?

If we contend for the primitive gospel, why should we not manifest some of its spiritual fruits? Why such ideas exist relative to the prayer meeting will be the subject of a future article.

STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

Note.—Whatever questions you may desire to ask upon this work will be cheerfully answered, if I can do so, if you will send the question and a stamp for return postage to me.

RULES TO BE OBSERVED

1. To understand the language of a speaker or writer it is necessary, first of all to know the meaning of his words. Therefore we must seek, (a) the primitive signification of the word, (b) its actual meaning in common usage, and (c) the writer or speaker's use of it.

2. Having familiarized ourselves with the meaning of words or the methods by which their signification and usage are ascertained we are prepared to investigate the sense. The correct interpretation of a writer is possible only when the laws of grammar and the facts of history are inviolably regarded. The grammatical sense is essentially the literal; while the historical sense is that demanded by the historical considerations. When rightly understood these two senses are synonymous.

3. This grammatico-historical sense is brought out by a study for the *context*, *scope* and *plan* of the author's work under consideration.

4. A careful comparison of parallel passages is always very suggestive in determining the true sense of the writer.

5. Always and everywhere we must bear in mind the *subject-matter* and *style* of language and the proper distinction between *substance* and *form*.

6. Prophecy in the main is to be interpreted as other Scripture, except those portions which forecast the future. These portions are of an exceptional character, expressed in prose or poetry, figure or symbol,